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# WHAT IS NIPPON KOKUTAI?

INTRODUCTION TO NIPPONESE NATIONAL PRINCIPLES

By

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## **PART IV HOW THE JUSTICE OF NIPPON KOKUTAI ACTED AND CAME INTO EXISTENCE**

### **CHAPTER I THE SUBJECTS AND FUNCTIONS OF THE THREE GREAT PRINCIPLES**

#### **(1) THE SUBJECT IS THE AGENCY OF THE FUNCTIONS.**

As roughly outlined in the foregoing chapter, the substance of the Justice of our Kokutai was first made public in Nippon through the Emperor Jimmu's declaration, and, as the highest standard of man's morality lifted high up in the sky over the world, consists of three principles: the virtue of "Happiness," the wisdom of "Glories," and the courage of "Righteousness." I am now going to tell how they have acted and become a practical morality for mankind and how they have been organized into national power; by so doing I want to impress upon you the fact that the Empire of Nippon is not a baseless

existence but one that is never to change with its eternal life and far-off origin. The reader is requested not to treat what I am going to relate like all the insignificant writings and words popular in society.

(2) FROM THE THREE SUBJECTS:

“HAPPINESS,” “GLORIES,” AND “RIGHTEOUSNESS”  
COME THE FUNCTIONS OF “ACCUMULATION,”  
“AMASSMENT,” AND “CULTIVATION.”

Any truth or any righteousness, unless it actually works, is like paper money not in circulation—a worthless existence. In some circumstances it may bring about trouble; most of the theories and moralities of the world have fallen into this evil state. The Three Great Principles declared by the Emperor Jimmu are a general rule for mankind to work actively, without a hitch, in all ages with its subjects made clear and its main functions included in it. That this rule is woven, as it is, into a state organization is a special way which has

never been tried by saint or wise man anywhere else on earth—this we call the Kokutai of Nippon. The way the functions are set in motion is not unnatural; as fire burns for itself and water runs by itself even if left alone, the functions are led out of the subjects by their nature itself, and just as the burning of fire and the movement of water are both natural, “Happiness” is “cultivated,” all driven on by the natural agent, and Happiness, Glories and Righteousness create their natural functions respectively to realize their real worth in society.

(3) THE WAY UNIVERSALITY AND ETERNITY  
PLAY ACTIVE PARTS.

“Happiness” means the benevolence, the virtue of charity; what the pioneers of the state did and expanded gradually is traced, and those who come after them think of it, respect it and are thankful for its blessings, which become the source of consolation to

their mind and also form not only the standard they aim at but their strength: In this point the virtue creates an eternal life and in tracing it back to its origin and looking back upon it is found the advancement of morality. Therefore the main cause of the virtue is in "accumulation" and to make what is accumulated our example is the "Universality" or "Eternity" of Benevolence, so that with reference to "Happiness" the word "accumulation" is used. The "accumulation"—this is the right way in which the virtue works. Even if there is a great virtue, it cannot be effective unless it is accumulated. This is also the case with Glories. A man is, no doubt, of the virtue of charity, wisdom, and courage. In this point, therefore, we could say everybody is a man of virtue, but we can never say he is a virtuous man unless he expresses and practises his virtues. Again, even if he should have put in practice any of his virtues, when he did it by fits

and starts with no definite purpose or origin or foundation in his mind, it is not a virtuous deed coming out of his principle, and there is no telling when it may change, and it can never be relied upon. Such a virtue belongs to that which is off the track of life,—that is, it may be likened to a parvenu wanting fixed property and stability of purpose, and cannot so much as be the model of an age, still less the highest morality holding good through all ages and all over the earth. The morality indicated by Nippon Kokutai is by no means so trifling and cheap a thing, but is on a large scale and of a far-off origin, firm and unshaken, handed down from Heaven to men; from the ancestors, "like gods, like sages," it has been accumulated and amassed without any break or delay, so that "Accumulation of Happiness," "Amassment of Glories," and "Cultivation of Righteousness" are the expressions used of it, and what is important is in the "accumulation," "amassment," and "culti-

vation.” Fundamentally speaking, virtues exist of themselves in the universe even if left alone, and as it is men that practise them, it seems that we have only to deal with men, but this is not enough. Both Buddha and Confucious preached, as the fundamental truth or as a means of discipline, and with individuals as the aim, the value of morality, but because they did not treat men in a body or crystalize them into a nation with men as one of its functions, but dealt directly with individuals that are changeable and movable, they were led to failure, all their efforts coming to naught in such a way that what had once been accumulated was destroyed and what had once been destroyed was accumulated again; even today, thousands of years after their time, the power of performing their business of enlightenment is not certain and strong. And it is only in the founding of Nippon under the sun that the sustaining power and practicableness of what is called “virtue”

are founded on the great organ of the state and settled. In fact, both Buddha and Confucious waited for this to be realized, attending on the times.

(4) POWER GOING BACK TO ITS ORIGIN  
FROM THE LOWER PART TO THE UPPER.

The realization of virtues must not be attained to suddenly. Unless there is something their fundamental nature depends upon, they are like flowers with their roots cut off; even if they may look beautiful at first, they will wither soon and such a thing as unchangeableness in them can never be hoped for. And the most important point is in whether they have their origin or not—in other words, whether so-called “accumulation,” “amassment,” and “righteousness” have gone into their making. In that ours have been kept up without any break since our sacred ancestors’ times you may find there is an unlimited guarantee power and a boundless practicableness, so that, even

when transferred to our descendants, they can remain the same, forming eternal rules to be observed and inherited with no cessation or break guaranteed as faultless in all ages and places. As the most powerful organization for observing the rules, the state is needed; that is, on the organizing power of the state depends and is settled the power of practice of morality: activities of "morality" which cannot be materialized by any other morality or religion have been turned out by the "state." For this reason, to accumulate and to amass and to cultivate is the duty of the "state."

(5) LEADING POWER MOVING FROM THE  
UPPER PART TO THE LOWER.

That the state is an organization for making the virtues play an active part means that the virtues accumulated and cultivated, as a habit among the Imperial ancestors, handed from god to god, react and become examples to posterity and plant

the habit of acting virtuously into the character of the people and at last "from generation to generation illustrate the beauty thereof." This has its source in "our subjects are ever united,..." and it is in the passage in the Imperial Rescript on Education given by the Emperor Meiji—"Our Imperial Ancestors have founded our Empire on a basis broad and everlasting and have deeply and firmly implanted virtue,..."—and that virtue has become the character of the race and also the life of the state, which has developed in loyalty and filial piety, is, as pointed out, because its general origin lies in the blessings of "Accumulation of Happiness," "Amassment of Glories," and "Cultivation of Righteousness," practised by the Imperial ancestors for long ages. That the Empire's foundation is broad and everlasting means "amassment," and the deep and firm virtue implies "accumulation." Ours is an intention to moralize the state so that it may be obliged

to follow morality whether it will or not—not in such a way as preaching the truth according to the man to be dealt with—and to assimilate everything in that state on a large scale. This is why it is said that there is a great assimilability in Nippon Kokutai. The leading activity of this assimilating power is called the “Benign rule of the Tenno.”

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CHAPTER II THE WAY OF THE TENNO  
(THE RULE OF RIGHT AND JUSTICE)  
MEANT BY NIPPON KOKUTAI

(1) WHAT IS THE SO-CALLED  
WAY OF THE TENNO?

In the political philosophy of China, since olden times, “The Way of the Prince” has been extensively advocated. There is no mistake, as a whole, in its meaning and order, but as there is no “state,” the living expression and practical organization of this “Morality” and accordingly successors are not fixed from the beginning; only when there appeared a great man was the country governed well, and when he died it returned soon, without exception, to what it had been. There are two ways in which it is carried out, one in peace and the other in reaction and conflict; revolution is inevitable anyway. The idea that even if there is a revolution, it is all right if only the government is in the right has formed the background of the

pretexts of the revolutionists, and with every change of governments and royal families, such troubles as doing things over again from the beginning have been arisen and the people have experienced many wars: this is the state in which China has existed from ancient times. The reason for this is that "the Way of the Prince" is talked of in China but not really practised. This is a thing found not only in China, but in most of the nations of the world. With the great intention that this should be avoided, and for the purpose of unifying earthly civilization by means of heavenly, which is "the Way of the Prince" created by the gods, the administering of the state begun by the Imperial ancestors has been succeeded to, and by the Emperor Jimmu's declaration, advocacy, and practice, the "Great Way of the Tenno of the Empire of Nippon" was established upon the earth for the first time. In reality it is our mission to guide and induce every country in the world to become

a "state ruled by the Way of the Prince." Now our neighbour state, Manchoukuo, has taken the lead in establishing the state on "the Way of the Prince" as its basis, and for Nippon it is one of the realizations of our ideal in one corner of the globe, so that we should naturally be glad of it and help it and pray for its sound growth, and it is the very mission of the founding of Nippon to hope for and help the effects of Manchoukuo's birth to spread first to China proper, the nearest place, and cause the four hundred odd states of China to form a land of "the Way of the Prince" and then be expanded to the various countries both in the East and in the West, and change the whole world into a great paradise governed by "The Way of the Prince."

(2) THE WAY OF THE TENNO AND  
THE WAY OF THE PRINCE.

The difference between the Way of the Tenno and the Way of the Prince lies in



that the former is a fact and the latter is a theory. Nippon is possessed of "the Way of the Prince" based on theory and on fact. Before the State was born there had already existed its foundation; it was not, of course, created by men. The fact that it has been inherited from the Imperial ancestors, like gods, like sages, is its special characteristic. Since we do not discuss it, calling it "the Way of the gods" it is quite needless to say that it was not created by human hands and is a special and unique existence, the only existence of its sort, never to be imitated by anybody in the world. In short, it is such an absolute existence that all the other nations in the world should, sooner or later, assimilating and uniting with it, look up to it, after all, as the leading power concerning morality in the universe,\* when the nobleness of the Way of the Tenno will

\* A great scholar of Europe, Mr. Stein once told Viscount Kaieda and Mr. Sakura Maruyama that Nippon could unify the whole world as the leading power in the matter of morality.

shine with the recognition of all the nations. Though I have written thus, it is quite out of place, from the nature of the Way of the Tenno, to distinguish between the Way of the Tenno and the Way of the Prince as if despising the latter; for when, in a country, though it be not coeval with heaven and earth, the principle and aim of the government is in "the Way of the Prince," there is no difference in its morality's substance and capacity, even if it is subsequently and humanly created. The country, after all, though rather late in time, follows what Nippon Kokutai has shown, and so it should be respected.

(3) THE TERM "THE WAY OF THE PRINCE"  
HAS ITS ORIGIN IN THE ORACLE GIVEN  
BY THE SUN-GODDESS.

Originally, the Way of the Tenno that was born and realized in Nippon Kokutai is not like those vegetables that grow according to the nature of the soil, but is an absolute

truth in the universe that has been transplanted unchanged; so, in other words, it is universal justice, not such an illiberal way of morality as is limited by frontiers or races, but a universal and fair way by following which anybody can be right and just. To take this for quite a different thing from the Way of the Prince in the political philosophy of China would be to disregard the *sacred desire of "Extension of the Heavenly Task."*\* For instance, in Buddhism it is taught that everybody has in himself

\*The first Emperor Jimmu, when he was about to lead his expedition to the east, said of the central part of Nippon proper, "I think that this land will undoubtedly be suitable for the extension of the *Heavenly Task*, so that its glory should fill the universe." The Heavenly Task here means nothing but the *Inheritance of the Imperial Throne*, and in the firm belief of the Nipponese race the Throne of the Emperor occupied by a single dynasty through all ages is the centre of Nipponese civilization, whose existence is for all mankind—the symbol of the Heavenly Task. This belief is now more and more brilliantly burning in the life of the race; when Nipponese soldiers fall on the battle field they neither call their wife's name nor their parents' names nor pray to the gods, but cry out, "Long live the Emperor," and enter eternal life. This was true of all persons, without exception, who died in the Sino-Nipponese and the Russo-Nipponese wars or in the Manchurian and Shanghai incidents. That this is possible is entirely due to such a profound historical and vital belief as ours.

the nature of the Buddha and that no one is originally different from the Buddha, so that one can surely become a saint like the Buddha if one comprehends the Buddha's thoughts and follows his actions: in this point there is the truth and practicability of the way that all men can become Buddhas, and just in the same way, any country can make itself a land of peace and ease if only it puts "the Way of the Prince" in practice, causing the same good as Nippon Kokutai, and here is found the grandest and most precious beauty of "the Way of the Tenno" and also in this point the so-called great plan of assimilation established by the gods is successful. And it is the purpose of our Way of the Tenno to universalize the assimilation throughout the world, so we can, and should, as its initiator, distribute the fundamental truth of the Way of the Prince, otherwise the "way" stamped by the Emperor Meiji as being "true in all places" would be useless.

Let us now, therefore, consider the Sun-Goddess' oracle, the origin of the idea of the Way of the Prince, which she gave when she chose the state of Nippon—"This Reed-plain-1500-autumns-fair-rice-ear-land is the region where you *shall exercise the beneficial sovereign rule*." The words "shall exercise the beneficial sovereign rule" are really sacred words by which she indicated the substance and main use of the Nipponese Way of the Emperor, and the term "Sovereign" has two meanings, one a proprietor of land, and the other a sovereign who actually puts in practice the Way of the Prince has a duty to realize the truth of Heaven among human beings. In the Chinese language, when the character 王 has its origin in the former meaning, it is pronounced in an even tone and in a second case it is pronounced with a fall of the voice, and they use a mark indicating the fall of the voice to distinguish between them. The character "王" (sovereign or

prince) in this oracle should be pronounced in an even tone and means practising what is called "the Way of the Prince." As clearly shown in the passage, she commanded, saying, "Do thou my august grandchild, proceed thither and rule it;" for Nippon was the place where the Way of the Prince was to be practised and her descendants who received the command were to be actual executors of it, and all this was the foundation of ruling the land.

In short, that which is the perfect Way of the Prince is called "the Way of the Tenno" or "Nippon Kokutai"—universal justice; it is not that there are two different substances in "Michi" itself. Only, in Nippon it has existed as a traditional fact, which we cannot say is the same as in other nations; in Nippon it is not the Way of the Prince as an ideal but a firm historical fact. In Nippon the descendants of the Sun-Goddess occupy the Imperial Throne, being the executors of the Way of the

Prince themselves, united into one body with the "Michi" unchangeable from time immemorial, and occupying in this way a sacred position coeval with heaven and earth; all of this has held good from the very far-off ages of the gods and will through all changes to come, and is intended to give and show the truth and reality of peace and restfulness, as the sun in the heavens sends its light impartially, as far as human beings live. This is why Nippon is called the model country of the world. The Emperor Jimmu's sacred words "extending the Heavenly Task" has this idea.

(4) WHAT THE FORM OF THE CHINESE  
CHARACTER MEANS.

The first history written at the Imperial command, the *Nippon Shoki*, was written in Chinese, and since it was written in that language, we cannot be indifferent to the meaning of Chinese characters. Especially concerning the most important events, it

is most necessary to understand them correctly. In the interpretation of the Constitution of Nippon, to take for purposes of comparison the doctrines of foreign constitutions would give us some suggestions. It is a matter of course that their theories cannot overrule our facts; but referring to the officially approved records of the country for the understanding of Nipponese facts, is by no means for suggestions or hints, but, on the contrary, a correct way of interpretation. The shortest way to the correct interpretation is to understand rightly, first of all, the characters conveying historical records, and it is not until we get the real significance from the right interpretation and display the facts that the interpretation is perfect.

You may easily understand that there is a close, inescapable relation between the meaning of the writings put down in Chinese and that represented by the characters themselves, while there has been a mistake

on the part of a portion of the Nipponese classical scholars in the disregarding of Chinese characters somehow or other without thinking of the real reason they were adopted in writing the authentic history; there are besides those who are fascinated with modern western theories, and who—from too indifferent and rough an idea about Chinese characters, with their too shallow brains to treat the authentic history, especially the most important item in it, like those random articles in newspapers—fail to seek the invaluable jewel, go over the reliable historical records, and bring things to confusion, entangled by subtle reasonings and complications: they are like so many swine with pearls cast before them; nothing is so absurd as this. Originally, Chinese writings consist of ideograms, and so the first thing to think of in their interpretation should be that any and every character of which sentences are composed has its own

meaning. For instance the figures 一, 二, 三 imply number by their shape. The character 山 represents the shape of a mountain, and the character 川 consists of a stream (the centre line) and its banks (the two lines on both sides of the centre), thus letting the shape tell the meaning of the character. It is a characteristic of Chinese characters that there is not a single dot or line that is useless or mistaken. When compared with the letters of western and some other countries, which represent sound, Chinese characters may, of course, have some advantages and some disadvantages, but the characters into which not only all things in nature but also every phase of the extremely complicated and delicate heart and mind of man are woven by marks representing shape are wonderful enough to surprise us as perhaps the greatest product of civilization. I am so proud of Chinese characters that I am inclined to think that there may come a day when all

the nations, appreciating their quality, will come to use them.

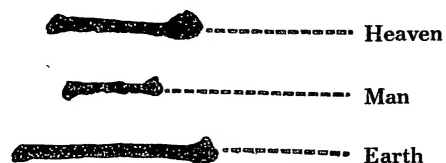
No doubt, the more serious the passages, the more important the value of proving the meanings of the characters in the historical records written in Chinese.

Regarding “the Way of the Prince” which is clearest, easiest to understand and most important as the centre of the question, I will now explain to you by means of the shape and meaning of the character 王 (Prince, King, Emperor etc.), and dwell on the meaning indicated by it. You would make a big mistake to think that undertaking the explanation of the character is out-of-date; I am sure this is the most advanced and best and newest way of reasoning in the present world. The character 王 is of three horizontal lines with a perpendicular one, beginning from the upper horizontal line and ending at the lower, crossing the middle. The three

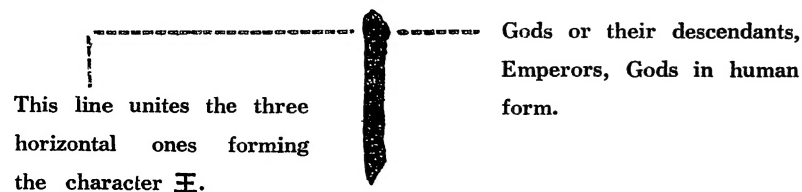
horizontal lines imply three agencies: Heaven, Earth, and Man, and the vertical line is defined as “Gods” or the ruler. I will now show this by a diagram, but before doing that I want to say that, from the importance of the construction of characters, the definition given by Tung Chung-shu, the celebrated Chinese scholar, that the three lines are three agencies is correct, it having been recognized by sages since olden times, and passes current as the right interpretation. Now, when the middle line of the three is “Man,” the perpendicular line, Gods, by uniting Heaven that is above with Earth situated below, crosses Man between Heaven and Earth. If you observe the central part of the character only, you will find it forms a cross, illustrating profound relations between Gods and Man, that is, it forms the character 十. The character can be read “Kanau” (meaning “adjustment”) according to the Nipponese way of reading Chinese characters, having a most profound

religious meaning: here work actively both Heaven and Earth, and this is the real function of the Way of the Prince.

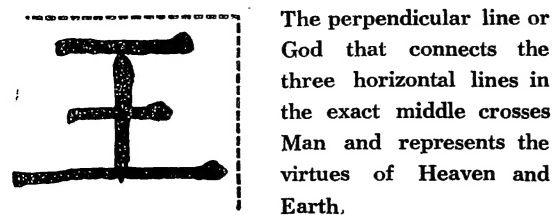
(1)



(2)



(3)



(5) THE CHARACTER 王 HAS TWO FUNCTIONS,  
AND THE TENNO (EMPEROR) OF NIPPON  
POSSESSES IN FULL BOTH OF THEM.

Now you have quite clearly understood the meaning of the character 王 from its shape. It is also necessary for you to know that the character has two meanings that work differently from each other; this is a rule peculiar to Chinese characters, which cannot be ignored. This is no other than the distinction of the four tones: the even, rising, sinking, and entering tones; and when pronounced in an even tone 王 means a sovereign and when in a sinking tone “prosper” or “flourishing”; in short it means to rule and guide the world, realizing the morality that a ruler should follow. Since olden times and throughout the world, sovereigns have occupied other countries by force, or have suddenly become rulers, their positions having been made over to them by their parents or other persons, and they



have not been rulers that descended directly from Heaven. They are described as “being in existence at present and not before,” and are not sovereigns born to “Heaven” or “Morality,” so they needs must be temporary and casual. The Emperor of Nippon alone is such a personage of virtue as is unique, really existing, and unchangeable for good with his origin in Heaven; “the Emperor is a God or Morality itself” and is at the same time the representative of distributing the blessings of the universe; again “the Emperor is nothing but the nation” and, including its people, and as the centre of every sort of morality, favour, throne, authority, and power in the universe, is a real existence that is as incomparably solemn as “Michi” is. Like a very rich and old family in which ideal heirs have succeeded to the house and put the property they have inherited from their fathers, not without working, to good use and increased it according to their will, the Emperor of

Nippon is the traditional ruler and sovereign acting upon his principles. Therefore it is absolutely impossible for any theory or any legal truth, so long as there is neither a square sun nor any water running uphill, to deny this fact, even comparing the Emperor of Nippon with any sovereign, not only in the present but in the past, in any country, at any time, all over the world. When viewed from the upper part to the lower, the character “ $\Xi$ ” is a natural monarch or a born ruler (when pronounced in an even tone) and, when seen from the lower part to the upper, it is the central figure in putting the Way of the Prince in practice and enlightening the people—the  $\Xi$  (when pronounced in a sinking tone) as the executor of the Way of the Prince. The Tenno as the  $\Xi$  in an even tone is coeval with heaven and earth, from the upper to the lower and is the ruler who descended from gods from the effect to the cause. The Tenno as the  $\Xi$  in a sinking tone faces the upper from



the lower and is coeval with heaven and earth and puts things into practice, coming from cause to effect. This being the case, for the appellation of the ruler of Nippon, there is no other word and there has been no precedent but to adopt the title "Tenno (Heavenly Ruler)."

(6) ESTABLISHMENT OF THE STATE WHERE  
THE REALIZATION OF "THE WAY OF THE  
PRINCE" IS TO BE PROVED.

As above stated, the organization of the state in which the active working of the three agencies; Heaven, Earth, and Man are being constantly realized is no other than the living body of "Michi." And that which gives life to the body, the natural functions of "Michi," are "accumulation," "amassment," and "cultivation."

From Heaven down to Earth and that through Man between them should the functions act: Heaven and Earth and Man, these three come in contact with one another

through Gods, when the Michi becomes effective.

You cannot talk of Heaven, without Man, so Gods communicate with Man, and Man has connections with Heaven and Earth through Gods; in this lies the wonderful point that everything has its own place. The point at which Gods and Man communicate with each other is the motive organ of Heaven and Earth, and its actions are "accumulation," "amassment," and "cultivation" by which the virtuous body peculiar to Nippon is displayed. This is the unique country, Nippon.

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